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ABSTRACT

This curriculum guide describes an advanced course for speech classes in the oral interpretation of literature. It is meant to follow the first course, which introduced the subject and gave some fundamentals and practice in oral reading. The student is expected to meet the following objectives in the course: (1) demonstrate ability in using his voice as an instrument through practice in reading literature with a variety of moods, emotions, and characters; (2) devise methods to cut stories, essays, and plays to fit prescribed time limits; (3) compile a bibliography of literature suitable for interpretative reading for a general audience, an audience of young adults, or an audience of children; (4) select, arrange, and organize materials for a one-man show; and (5) participate in a performance for a selected audience. The guide presents numerous teaching strategies and learning activities to help the students accomplish the goals of the course. A bibliography of student and teacher resources consisting of state-adopted textbooks, professional books and periodicals, audio tapes, and records is included. (No grade level is specified.) (Author/DI)

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AUTHORIZED COURSES OF STUDY FOR THE QUINMESTER PROGRAM

DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LANGUAGE ARTS

Advanced Oral Interpretation of Literature

5114.109
5115.123
5116.124
5175.11

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ADVANCED ORAL INTERPRETATION OF LITERATURE

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English, Speech

Written by Vivian H. Hicks
for the
DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION
Dade County Public Schools
Miami, Florida
1972

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COURSE NUMBER

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COURSE TITLE: ADVANCED ORAL INTERPRETATION OF LITERATURE

COURSE DESCRIPTION: An emphasis upon further development of voice, imagination and emotion in creating word pictures for the audience. Included in the course are planning programs for performance, cutting selections, using music, movement, slides and other multi-media devices to make the program enjoyable for the audience.

I. PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

A. The student will demonstrate his ability to use his voice as an instrument through practice in reading various types of literature that contain a variety of moods, emotions, and characters.

B. The student will devise methods to use in cutting stories, essays, plays to fit prescribed time limits.

C. The student will compile a bibliography of literature which is suitable for interpretative reading for a general audience, an audience of young adults, and an audience of children.

D. Given a time limit, the student will select, arrange, and organize the materials for a one-man show.

E. Through the medium of Interpretative Theatre, the student will participate in a performance for a selected audience.

II. COURSE CONTENT

A. Rationale

The first course in oral interpretation introduced the subject and gave some fundamentals plus some practice in oral reading. However, the art of oral interpretation is not a simple process. It is one of the most important ones in the speech curriculum, since it is fundamental to all the others and since it centers on the individual instead of the group. Students who showed interest and enthusiasm for the first course will wish to become more involved in this art which has almost been lost.

Gertrude Johnson, a pioneer in this field, inaugurated the first college course in oral interpretation to be given credit. Professor Johnson stated the main purpose of oral interpretation for the individual, in these words:

> "Its main purpose should be to adjust yourself to all that you have met, to become vicariously aware and experienced in all emotional reactions, all people, all life, and peoples...the whole pageant of mankind in all its panoplies and trappings. This will give an understanding of the essential factors which make living possible."[1]

A teacher would hope that his own students will accomplish some of these things mentioned as they work with literature, the techniques of interpretation, and with other people in solo and theatre performances. This area of speech brings enjoyment to individuals and to groups. The student will find that "to enclose the crucial essence of life in an envelope of words and intonations is no small feat."[2] Pleasure, as well as diligent observation, use of imagination, and practice await the student of advanced oral interpretation.

B. Range of subject matter

1. Review of some basic techniques of interpretation of literature, including use of voice, imagination and emotion

2. Correct use and management of manuscripts

3. Use of bodily action and facial expression

4. Survey of types of literature suitable for solo and group performance

5. Methods of cutting a passage to a particular time limit

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[1]Skinner, Ray E. "Gertrude Johnson: Pioneer in Oral Interpretation," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 24 (September 1965), p. 229.

[2]Brown, Charles T. and Charles Van Riper. Speech and Man. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966, p. 132.

6. Differences of techniques which are used specifically with prose, poetry, drama

7. Preparation for a solo performance with continuity

8. Work with groups in planning for Readers' Theatre

9. The use of multi-media devices for enhancing the performance of literature

10. Work in planning an entire program for public presentation from selection of material to staging. Some attention should be given to the technical and business areas of a public performance.

III. TEACHING STRATEGIES

A. When there are techniques being taught during class time, group reading can help save precious time and cuts down the monotony of hearing the same passage read repeatedly. Through group reading each person gains some feel of the particular technique.

B. Because a series of poems, short stories or essays assigned for class performance often lead to monotony, the teacher should take the time to arrange assignments with "built in" variation. Arrange these for an effective program. The schedule of programs may be placed on the bulletin board or given out on ditto sheets.

Example:

Scene from Shakespeare (6 min.) ..... Mary Brown

Poetry (5 min.)..... John Smith

Theme Recital (10 min.) ..... Suzy Hope

Scene from modern play (10 min.)..... Agnes Okey

Nonsense poems (3 min.) ..... James Hays

It should be the responsibility of each student to check the bulletin board and prepare as carefully as for a public performance. Timing should include the introduction and the selection.

C. Although the teacher and students, after learning some of the elements of good criticism, do give constructive criticism in class, the teacher should, if at all possible, arrange an individual conference with each student. It is during this close relationship that the teacher and the student determine more definitely the areas in which the student needs special work. (Remember that isolation of one problem at a time keeps the student from becoming discouraged.)

IV. LEARNING ACTIVITIES

A. Review the important elements of voice. (Teachers – See "Oral Interpretation" course, and provide independent study where necessary.)

B. Review figures of speech and other basic elements which were presented in "Oral Interpretation" (first course). (These exercises could be done on the student's own time without taking time from the class.)

C. Choose a five minute selection from a current magazine, an editorial, current poetry or recent speech, newspaper, or Vital Speeches. Prepare carefully for presentation. Keep the major emphasis on communicating the content of the material. See how your voice responds for "the voice is the servant of the mind". Tape record this reading and listen very critically to the playback. What failed to be clear? How was voice quality? Rate? Emphasis? Phrasing? This will give you a starting place for individual practice for improvement.

D. Select a passage (ten minutes including the introduction) which requires you to be aware of both emotion and character. Rehearse it carefully, then present it to the class.

E. The interpretation of literature requires the use of many facets of the voice--pitch, loudness, duration, tonal quality. This demands that an interpreter of literature gain great flexibility of voice. As a practice in flexibility, try the following:

Select a familiar children's story or fable. Give the voice qualities needed if words were read. Instead of words use the syllable "la" for the entire story or fable. Pass out slips of paper to the class members and ask them to write the name of your selection. Compare the difference between those who were correct and those who missed. Would this indicate anything to you, the interpreter?

F. Select a favorite poem for class sharing. In your step of preparation look for meaning, special sounds, mood. Read to the class and ask for reactions of some of the members.

G. Select an interesting essay either from literature or current writing. Read for understanding and then write a précis. In class, choose a partner and do the following:

1. Exchange essays.

2. Both read essay of partner.

3. Read précis.

4. Discuss accuracy. Was the original idea kept intact?

H. Find a short story which you like but find too long for your allotted time to perform. Cut the selection to the time limit. Use the following list of suggestions to prepare the story for presentation.

1. Often the meaning of an entire paragraph can be expressed in one or two sentences.

2. Words not necessary to the total meaning may be cut.

3. Supply whatever meanings you can through your manner.

4. When you have established the character placement with the audience, dispense with such phrases as "he said"; "raising her eyebrows, she responded quickly"; "he replied with cold hatred in his voice", etc. Your manner and your voice should suggest such phrases.

5. Do not skeletonize your selection.

6. Find a happy medium.

I. Prepare a ten or twelve minute fragment of a much longer selection for interpretation. The selection should be near a climax in the action. Provide an introduction which gives your audience the context of the portion just before you begin reading. Rehearse aloud preferably with a tape recorder. This is for class presentation.

J. Select a section from a short story, novel or play in which there are three or four characters. Read the entire story, novel or play in order to understand the characters and the part they play in the action. Build in your mind a clear image of each character. Be able to build each character in the minds of the audience through the use of the explanation in the introduction, character placement and suggestions of his visible action (short of acting!), mannerisms and speech habits. While you are reading, try to be vividly aware of the meaning as you utter the sounds or words in order to recreate the passage for the listeners.

K. Select a children's story and try to recapture the very active imagination of a child. Tell the story to a group of children at a nearby elementary school or recreation center. Write a short paper describing your problems in selecting the story. Then describe the reaction of your audience of children. Do you feel that this activity was successful? If you feel that the reaction was not totally successful, attempt to think back and find the reason for lack of success. Schedule a second performance at the same place or one similar to it.

L. Arrange to read to a shut-in or to a group at a retirement home. It would be necessary to go through the following steps:

1. Determine the age of the audience.

2. Select a variety of materials which you think would appeal to this group.

3. Arrange the order of materials to be used.

4. Write the continuity for the program and practice it for extemporaneous delivery.

5. Rehearse the entire program so that it flows smoothly.

After you have presented your program, evaluate its effectiveness by the audience reaction.

M. Select a poem for presentation. After selecting it, analyze carefully its description, metaphors, expression of moods and feeling, its rhythm and statements. Practice reading aloud with full expression of all the sound values and the proper mood, tempo, and rhythm. Plan an introduction for the poem and read it to your classmates.

N. Plan a program of poetry for a solo performance. Arrange the poems around a central theme or use the poems of one author. This should be written up for sharing with the class. If possible, arrange to stage the poetry recital. You may use a stool, a lectern, or any other equipment you wish. You will need a spotlight on the area where the reader is sitting or standing. There is one word of caution. Use nothing which would distract the audience's attention from the reading.

(NOTE: Communicative Reading, 2nd ed. by Aggertt and Bowen has a detailed poetry recital pp. 425-449. This book is listed in the bibliography.)

O. Using 3/5 or 4/6 cards, prepare a bibliography of twelve short stories from a variety of authors. These should be suitable for oral reading. Read six of these and add a very short review of each. Keep these cards in your file case of selections.

P. Look over novels, drawn from your own reading, and select six which you think would contain interesting material for cuttings to be used later. Remember, these must have audience appeal. Finally, select one novel from which to make a cutting for reading.

Q. List twelve of your favorite poems, source, something informational about the author or his reason for writing the poem, or circumstances under which the poem was written. File these in your card file after they have been checked. (You should have divisions in the file for all types of writing. This makes the task easier when searching for material to use.)

R. Prepare a selected bibliography of dramatic works by playwrights. Select one of these for reading. After you have read the play, write a brief summary of the play. Indicate the type, the mood, and dialect type if any is used. Select a cutting for class performance, analyze the characters involved, the emotion, the main idea. Write an introduction. Together this introduction and the selection should not exceed twelve minutes. Remember your techniques. These are not tricks, but are skills in execution.

S. With other classmates plan an evening performance for Interpreters' Theatre. This will include the literature to be read, arrangement, transitions, lighting, music, dance, and slides to be used. Refrain from using too many effects in any one presentation.

Examples:

1. Interpretative dance to accompany the modern poetry of e. e. cummings.

2. Guitar accompaniment to reading verse by Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

3. Folk songs with verse from Edgar Lee Masters' Spoon River Anthology.

T. Select, with a class or group, a work of drama to be presented as a Readers'Theatre performance. The play should be well cast, but there should be no acting, costumes, or props such as those in a regular theatre performance. Rely on the voices to bring the dramatic experience to the audience. Analyze the play together and work for strong characterizations.

U. Arrange with the choral director to collaborate on a program of poetry interspersed with song. The selections of poems and songs should blend into an effective unit. Lighting will be very important for this program. The light shifts from reader to singers will act as the curtain. The program may have a central theme, may concern one poet, or may involve poets from a particular region or era.

V. OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

A. Volunteer for a regular story hour for a local library on Saturday morning.

B. Volunteer the same type of activity for a day care center.

C. Volunteer to read for blind students or other handicapped students in Special Education.

D. If your schedule does not allow time for going to the Special Education area, volunteer to make tapes for that department.

E. Contact the local group who sponsors the Talking Book Program and volunteer your services as a reader for the blind.

F. Organize a group to be active throughout the year for programs for civic and literary clubs in the community.

G. Cooperate with English and social studies classes in presenting interesting supplementary materials related to the particular area requested by the instructor.

H. If your school has a closed circuit television facility, use this tool for exposing other students to good, enjoyable oral reading. Divide into production teams. Then plan, rehearse and film programs which will appeal to the majority of the students. Keep in mind the fact that most Americans have grown up thinking of television and entertainment as interchangeable words. Never plan a program which does not meet the standards which should govern good television viewing. You will need the cooperation of the technician in charge of the CCTV in your school.

I. Use the televised program as an evaluative tool. View the programs and note where improvements may be made.

VI. STUDENT RESOURCES

A. State-adopted textbooks

Elson, E. Floyd, et al. The Art of Speaking, 2nd ed. Boston: Ginn and Co., 1966.

Hibbs, Paul, et al. Speech for Today. New York: Webster Division, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1965.

Lamars, William and Joseph M. Standocher. The Speech Arts. Chicago: Lyons and Carnahan, 1966.

B. Non-state-adopted supplementary materials

Arggertt, Otis J. and Elbert R. Bowen. Communicative Reading, 2nd ed. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967.

Bacon, Wallace A. The Art of Interpretation. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966.

Beloff, Robert. The Performing Voice in Literature. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966. (Useful manual with stimulating examples)

Bertram, Jean De Sales. The Oral Experience of Literature: Sense, Structure, and Sound. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967.

Brooks, Keith; Eugene Bahn; L. LaMont Okey. Literature for Listening. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1968.

Campbell, Paul N. Oral Interpretation. New York: Macmillan Co., 1966.

Coger, Leslie Irene and Melvin R. White. Readers Theatre Handbook. Glenville, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1967.

Eastman, Max. The Enjoyment of Poetry with Anthology. New York: Scribner and Sons, 1951.

Geiger, Don. The Sound, Sense and Performance of Literature. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1963.

Greeting, Baxter M. Interpretation for Our Time. Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown and Co., 1966.

Hunsinger, Paul. Communicative Interpretation. Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown and Co., 1967.

Lee, Charlotte I. Oral Interpretation, 4th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971.

Lowery, Sara and Gertrude Johnson. Interpretative Reading, Rev. ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953.

Parish, Wayland Maxwell. Reading Aloud, 4th ed. New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1966.

Thompson, David and Virginia Fredricks. Oral Interpretation of Fiction. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Burgess Publishing Co., 1964.

Velleuz, Jere. Oral Interpretation: The Re-Creation of Literature. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966.

Wolbert, Charles H. and Severina E. Nelson. The Art of Interpretative Speech: Principles and Practices, 5th ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967.

VII. TEACHER RESOURCES

A. Textbooks (See student list)

B. Professional books and periodicals

Beloof, Robert. "The Oral Reader and the Future of Literary Studies," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 18 (January 1969) pp. 9-12.

Brooks, Keith and John E. Brelenberg. "Readers' Theatre as Defined by New York Critics," The Southern Speech Journal, Vol. 29 (Summer 1964) pp. 288-302.

Coger, Leslie Irene. "Theatre for Oral Interpretation," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 12 (November 1963) pp. 322-330. (Contains many examples of materials adaptable to Readers Theatre)

Crocker, Lionel G. "How to Multiply the Side Values of Oral Interpretation," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 10 (January 1961) pp. 63-64. (See this for suggested assignment and projects.)

Dolman, John, Jr. The Art of Reading Aloud. New York: Harper Brothers Publishing Co., 1956. (This is one older book which has great value. It was published after his death. His presentation on reading poetry aloud to listeners is excellent. Most of the book deals with poetry.)

Gray, John W., editor. Perspectives on Oral Interpretation: Essays and Readings. Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Co., 1968. (This paperback will aid in structuring an advanced course.)

Harrison, Cleveland A. "Basic Lore of the Lecture Recital," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 20 (January 1971) pp. 10-15. (Contains guidelines for introductions, transitions and conclusions for lecture recitals)

Keltner, John W. Interpersonal Speech-Communication: Elements and Structures. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1970. (Chapter 15: "The Alchemy of Transformation: Oral Reading and Interpreting" pp. 350-375.)

Lennon, James E. and William W. Hamilton. "Charles Laughton's Interpretative Reading," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 4 (March 1955) pp. 87-88.

Lewis, George L., et al. Teaching Speech. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1969. (Chapter 8)

Parish, Wayland M. "Getting the Meaning in Interpretation," The Southern Speech Journal, Vol. 33 (Spring 1968) pp. 178-186.

Post, Robert M. "Achievement of Empathetic Response in Oral Reading," The Southern Speech Journal, Vol. 28 (Spring 1963) pp. 236-240.

_____. "Perception through Performance of Literature," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 19 (September 1970) pp. 168-172.

MacArthur, David E. "Readers Theatre: Variations on a Theme," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 13 (January 1964) p. 47. (This is interesting for anyone planning themes for Readers' Theatre--contains many suggestions.)

Rahlf, Arlan W. "Let's Sing-Read," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 15 (September 1966) pp. 229-231. (Contains some suggestions for lighting and staging a program)

Roach, Helen. Spoken Records, 3rd ed. Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1970. (A teacher planning to purchase spoken records will find this invaluable because Dr. Roach has listened to and commented on good and bad features of many types of recordings.)

Robb, Mary Robert. "Growing a Taste for Poetry," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 12 (November 1963) pp. 317-321.

Robinson, Karl F. and E. J. Kerikus. Teaching Speech, Methods and Materials. New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1963.

Sandifer, Charles M. "From Print to Rehearsal: A Study of the Principles for Adapting Literature to Readers Theatre," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 20 (March 1971) pp. 115-120. (Discusses selection principles, adaptation, cutting, special techniques, staging; quite valuable)

Sloan, Thomas O.; Beverly Whitaker; Joanna Maclay; Jere S. Veilleux; Mary Frances Hopkins. "Approaches to Oral Interpretation: A Symposium," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 28 (September 1969) pp. 187-203.

Skinner, E. Roy. "Gertrude Johnson: Pioneer in the Oral Interpretation of Literature," The Speech Teacher, Vol. 24 (September 1965) pp. 226-229.

Wheelwright, Philip. Metaphor and Reality. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1968. (cloth or paperback)

_____. The Burning Fountain: A Study in the Language of Symbolism. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1968.

C. Audio tapes

University of Minnesota, Extension Division will furnish a listing of materials which they will record on your tape, then the tape will be returned to you.

"Dartmouth Recording Project," Vol. 1 and 2 (Readings of poetry and prose recorded by twenty teachers at a convention of The Speech Association of America.)

Department of Speech
Dartmouth College
Hanover, N. H.

D. Records

Refer to listing of records in the quinmester course, "Oral Interpretation".

Dylan Thomas Reading. Caedmon (5-12") Vol. 1, TC 1002; Vol. 2, TC 1018; Vol. 3, TC 1043.

The Poetry of Langston Hughes Read by Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis. Caedmon (1-12") TC 1272.

An Informal Hour with Dorothy Parker. Spoken Arts (1-12").

Peter Ustinov Read His Own Works. CMS (1-12") CMS 524.

The Art of Ruth Draper. Volumes 1-5. Spoken Arts (5-12") Vol. 1, 779; Vol. 2, 793; Vol. 3, 799; Vol. 4, 800; Vol. 5, 805.

Arthur Miller, Speaking on and Reading from The Crucible, Death of a Salesman. Spoken Arts (1-12") 704.

A Recorded Anthology of Scottish Verse: Part One: Poems of Robert Burns. Read by Harold Weightman. Scottish Records (1-12") SR 124.

Bernard Shaw's Don Juan in Hell. Starring Charles Boyer. Columbia (2-12") 8L 166.

Spoon River Anthology. Columbia (1-12") OL 6010, OS 2410.

Old Testament Psalms and the Tale of David Read by Judith Anderson. Caedmon (1-12") TC 1053.

Black Pioneers in American History, Vol. 1, 19th Century. Read by Eartha Kitt and Moses Gunn. Caedmon (1-12") TC 1252.

T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral. Caedmon (1-12") TRS 308.

Cyrano de Bergerac. Caedmon (3-12") TRS 306.

Saint Joan. Caedmon (4-12") TRS 311.

Addresses of record companies are listed below:

Caedmon Records, 461 8th Avenue, New York, New York 10001.

Columbia Records, 1501 Broadway, New York, New York 10019.

Scottish Records, 52 Bon Acord Street, Aberdeen, Scotland or

Scottish Records, Ltd., 39 Greenford Gardens, Greenford, Middlesex, England.

Spoken Arts, Box 542, New Rochelle, New York.

NOTE: For a very complete listing of early and newer recordings with a statement concerning level of the performance look into Roach's Spoken Records which is listed in the teacher's bibliography.